

# HUMANITARIAN UPDATE



A child looks on as IOM-supported workers help newly displaced people set up their tents in Ma'rib. Photo: IOM 2020

Issue 5 / May 2021

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OCHA

YEMEN

## HIGH-LEVEL SWEDISH DELEGATION VISITS YEMEN

A high-level Swedish delegation recently concluded a five-day mission to Yemen as a follow-up to the High-Level Pledging Event (HLPE) for the humanitarian crisis in Yemen held on 1 March 2021. Sweden co-hosted the HLPE together with Switzerland and the United Nations.

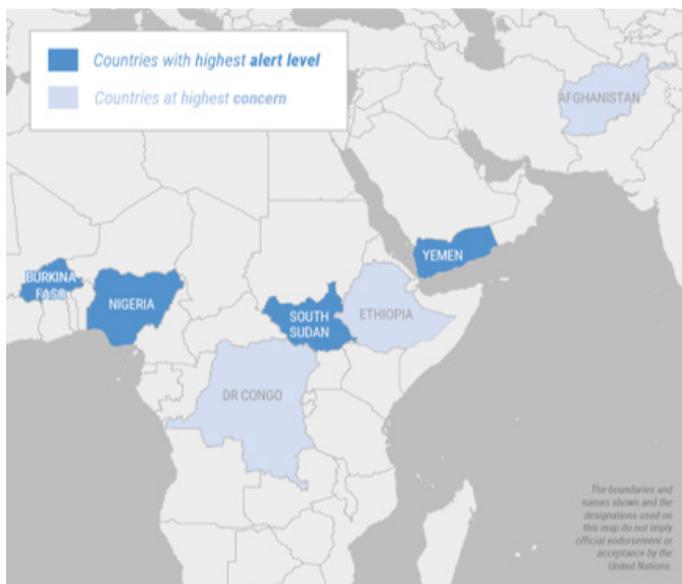
From 18 to 22 May, the Swedish delegation met with authorities and humanitarian partners in Aden and Sana'a, and undertook field missions to assess the humanitarian situation in the country. They also assessed progress on the seven benchmarks set out in 2019 which reflect the universal humanitarian principles. The benchmarks include implementing coordinated and countrywide assessments in 2020, piloting WFP's re-targeting and biometric registration, rescinding a 2 per cent levy on humanitarian projects, facilitating the approval of the backlog of NGO project sub-agreements and the renewal of international NGO principal agreements.

Progress has been made on some of the benchmarks in the last year, which is an important step towards a more conducive operating environment for the humanitarian response in Yemen and needs to be sustained, even as much more progress is still needed.

The delegation's mission also preceded the third Humanitarian Senior Officials Meeting (SOM III) on Yemen, which Sweden co-hosted with the EU. Held on 1 June, SOM III was convened to take stock of the humanitarian response in Yemen, particularly the operating environment and the removal of constraints to humanitarian access.

## GLOBAL EFFORTS TO AVERT HUNGER GAIN MOMENTUM

More than 34 million people worldwide are at risk of dying of hunger this year. Of these people, 8.6 million live in Burkina Faso, north-east Nigeria, South Sudan and Yemen. To avert famine in these countries, the UN Secretary-General established a High-Level Task Force (HLTF) on Preventing Famine to mobilize famine-prevention resources, advocate for improved access to people in need, and join up efforts to share data and real-time information. The task force is co-chaired by USG/ERC Mark Lowcock, along with FAO and WFP principals.



The forecast for famine in Yemen in 2021 is alarming, with 16.2 million people facing a critical lack of food (IPC 3+). This includes 5 million people who face death from hunger and malnutrition (IPC 4) and 47,000 people already living in famine-like conditions (IPC 5). For Yemen, a request for US\$672 million was submitted to the Task Force for consideration. This amount is part of the 2021 Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan. The country-level task force core members (OCHA, WFP, FAO) are also finalizing a resource mobilization strategy to support the HLTF's efforts.

Meanwhile, an additional \$450 million has been secured from the Famine Relief Fund, an organization described as a "special purpose vehicle to alleviate hunger and prevent famine in Yemen". The Fund's objective is to avert widespread famine in Yemen through a rapid funding mechanism supporting food security through in-kind assistance or cash and voucher assistance, and nutrition via prevention and treatment activities. Some 75 per cent of the funding will support food security, while the remainder will go towards nutrition activities.

## FLOODS SWEEP ACROSS YEMEN CAUSING EXTENSIVE DAMAGE

Torrential rains and flooding swept large areas of Yemen starting in mid-April and continuing into the first week of May. Aden, Hadramawt, Hajjah, Lahj, Abyan, Dhamar, Ma'rib and Al Bayda were the most severely impacted governorates, with floods damaging infrastructure, destroying homes and shelters, and causing deaths and injuries. Agricultural lands were also reported to be washed out in Abyan, Raymah, Al Mahwit and Ta'iz governorates. Ad Dali' and Sana'a governorates were also impacted. Field reports indicate that at least 6,855 families were affected by flooding, about 75 per cent of whom are internally displaced people

(IDPs) living in inadequate shelters and areas with poor drainage infrastructure.

In Hadramawt's Tarim District, authorities reported that floods swept through parts of the town, causing extensive damage to property, farms and infrastructure, including houses, power lines, roads, the sewage system and IDP sites. Floods caused the collapse of 200 mud houses, killing four people. The authorities there appealed for food assistance and support in clearing stagnant water, which they feared might risk increasing threats from water-borne diseases. In Aden, 1,076 families living in IDP sites were affected when heavy rains and floods hit Dar Saad,

Al Mualla and Al Buriqa districts. Heavy rains also damaged IDP shelters in Al Husha District of Ad Dali' Governorate.

In Al Sowayda IDP site in Ma'rib Governorate, 1,803 families were affected, with children, women and the elderly becoming sick with flu as a result of heavy rains and suffering from panic attacks as flood water entered their shelters. In Sana'a Governorate, 545 families living in an IDP site in Sanhan District were affected by floods, with 110 families severely affected as floods either entirely or partially destroyed their shelters. Elsewhere, 639 IDP families were affected, most losing their shelters, in Dhamar Governorate, and 403 families in Al Bayda Governorate required urgent assistance after heavy rains and flooding swept away their household items.

Humanitarian partners responded to the needs of affected families in accessible areas. Given the gravity of the situation in Tarim District of Hadramawt Governorate, humanitarian partners launched a multisectoral response, providing Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) assistance to 167 families, shelter support to 120 families, food assistance to 100 families, clothing to 200 families, and mattresses and blankets to 100 families. Partners also coordinated fog spraying of stagnant

floodwater to prevent disease outbreaks and are working on the rehabilitation of the flood drainage systems. Health partners provided medical supplies, including 200 hygiene kits, and trauma and surgical kits to Tarim Hospital.

In Aden Governorate, WASH partners dislodged floodwater from affected IDP sites, while the Health Cluster coordinated fog spraying in flood-affected areas. Food Security partners provided regular food assistance in mid-May. Shelter and NFI assistance were also identified as urgent needs. In Ma'rib Governorate, Food Security partners provided cash assistance to 212 families and provided health care services at Al Sowayda IDP site.

In Ta'iz Governorate, aid partners provided emergency shelter in the form of plastic sheets to IDPs sites and RRM assistance to 26 families, while in Ad Dali' they provided regular food assistance to all IDPs, including those affected by flooding, and NFI and shelter assistance to 300 affected families. RRM partners assisted 130 families in Abyan Governorate, 40 families in Lahj Governorate, and 31 families in Al Hodeidah Governorate. The Protection Cluster assessed 110 families in Sana'a Governorate, providing psychosocial support to women, men and children.

## FIRES AND RAIN INTENSIFY DIFFICULTIES AMIDST CONTINUED DISPLACEMENT IN MA'RIB

The fighting in Ma'rib Governorate shows no signs of abating, with hostilities in the past month still mainly focused in areas northwest, west and southwest of Ma'rib City. The number of civilians displaced by this continues to rise as ever more people seek safety away from the frontlines, many of them in locations that are already overcrowded and lacking adequate services. Noting that the true figure is likely much higher, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates that by mid-May some 2,912 families were displaced across the governorate since the escalation of hostilities in early February 2021, of whom over 2,650 families were displaced from or within Sirwah District. While Sirwah is the most affected of Ma'rib's 14 districts, people have also been displaced

from and within Raghwan, Rahabah and Madghal districts by fighting at their frontlines.

Though seeing smaller numbers than Sirwah District, Ma'rib City and Ma'rib Al Wadi District have also received significant numbers of newly displaced people. According to IOM, this is due to the greater access to livelihood opportunities and humanitarian assistance in these two districts, as well as the availability of open spaces in which shelters can be erected, especially in Ma'rib Al Wadi District. Since early February 2021, 31 new internally displaced persons (IDP) hosting sites have opened in four districts of Ma'rib Governorate: one in Rahabah, three in Raghwan, four in Al Jubah, five in Ma'rib City and 18 in Al Wadi.

The fighting continues to crowd ever more people into already overpopulated hosting sites, intensifying already severe needs and mounting tensions between new arrivals and existing residents. In the latter half of May, some 129 displaced families were relocated away from the Al Rakzah IDP site in Ma'rib District to three other sites after being threatened by tribesmen in the Al Rakzah area. Of these families, 121 have since returned to the Al Rakzah site following reconciliation with the tribesmen, but continue to report feeling unsafe.

The ongoing displacements are heightening the risk of COVID-19 transmissions, especially given poor sanitation conditions, with significant gaps in latrine availability and waste management services ongoing since 2019. They are also raising the likelihood of incidents leading to death, injury and loss of assets. Exemplifying this is the Aljufainah IDP hosting site, located in Ma'rib City, which experienced a fire in April that killed a child, injured several other civilians, and destroyed 18 shelters. In May, the same site – whose population has more than tripled over the past two years – endured at least four other fire incidents. Fires were also reported in other sites, such as Aal Shabwan, Ma'rib City and Al Wadi, in April and May, with at least nine incidents destroying displaced families' belongings. Humanitarian partners are working to reduce fire hazards across IDP



Two displaced women sit with some possessions in Sirwah District. © Saleh Al Rosi, Sana'a Coalition for Relief and Development (SCRD)



Part of the Al Sowayda IDP site in Sirwah District. © Saleh Al Rosi, Sana'a Coalition for Relief and Development (SCRD)

sites, including by training community volunteers on fire prevention and providing displaced persons with fire extinguishers. Yet no precautions can completely eliminate such risks, given the prevailing conditions. Each new fire incident creates new losses, compounding vulnerabilities and increasing existing gaps in meeting the needs for shelter, food, health and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) assistance.

Adding to the troubles of people displaced in Ma'rib is the arrival of the rainy season, with heavy rainfall damaging and destroying shelters – often tents – and causing widespread flooding. At the end of April, at least 512 shelters were destroyed by heavy storms impacting the Al Sowayda IDP site in Sirwah District, leaving the affected families with little recourse but to reside in makeshift or shared shelters. To date, at least 1,801 families living in Al Sowayda have been impacted by heavy rains and floods this rainy season. Humanitarian partners, who have already undertaken flood risk reduction interventions such as erecting flood gabion walls and rainwater drainage systems, continue to highlight the need for an enhanced flood response, to protect the already vulnerable residents of hosting sites susceptible to flood and rain damage.

## FUEL CRISIS DEEPENS

The fuel crisis continues to intensify since the beginning of the year, affecting people's ability to access essential assistance and services, hindering aid agencies' ability to deliver life-saving assistance, increasing already skyrocketing prices for food, water and other essential goods, and adding further pressure on the civilian population's ability to survive. The crisis is also negatively affecting the commercial sector, particularly small businesses, and livelihoods such as fishing and agriculture, and is a key economic driver of the humanitarian crisis.

Fuel imports from Al Hodeidah port have continued to decline in 2021, with a 91 per cent decrease between January and April this year, according to the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism (UNVIM). In a precedent not seen since the blockade was imposed on Yemen at the start of the conflict in 2015, no commercial fuel imports came in through Al Hodeidah port for 52 days from 28 January to 21 March 2021. Fuel import levels dropped to zero for the first time in February. As highlighted by USG/ERC Mark Lowcock in his May UN Security Council briefing, only 200,000 metric tons of fuel entered Al Hodeidah in the first quarter of this year, which is a drop of about two-thirds compared to other years. The magnitude of the situation is highlighted by the fact that more than half of Yemen's fuel imports come through Al Hodeidah port.

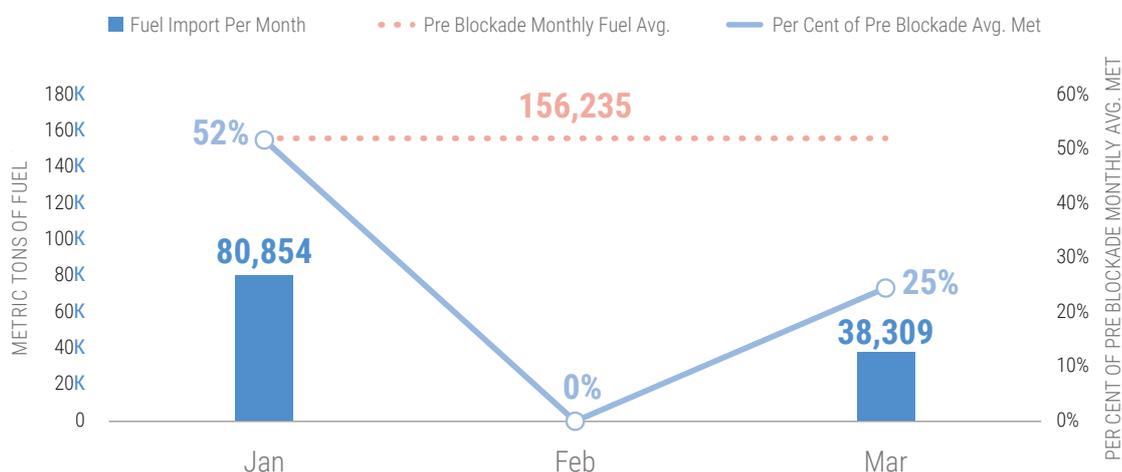
As of 26 May, six ships carrying 148,653 metric tonnes of fuel, which have been cleared by UNVIM, are being held in what is known

as the Coalition Holding Area in the Red Sea, waiting for the authorities to give them permission to dock and offload. On average, these fuel ships have been floating in the waters of the Red Sea waiting to dock for more than 100 days.

Recent surveys show that in the worst-affected areas, people are struggling to afford the cost of transport to reach aid distribution points to collect assistance. Others face challenges accessing services, such as health centers run by INGOs, especially people in rural areas where fuel and transport costs tend to be higher. The cost of public transport has increased due to fuel shortages, doubling the price for a trip in some areas. The frequency of buses and public transport has also reduced in recent months. Patients are advocating with health centers to operate mobile clinics as they cannot afford to come to health centers.

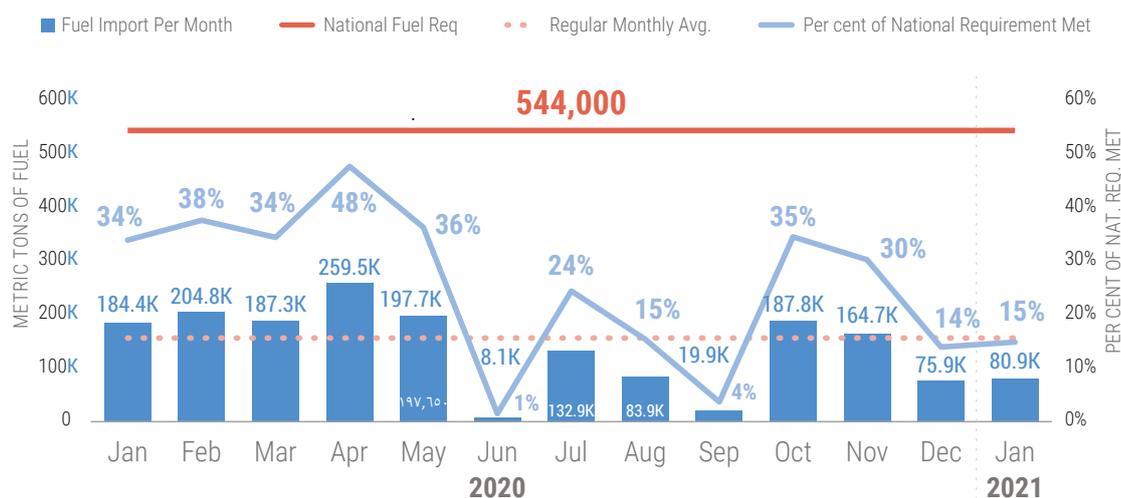
In some areas, partners are resorting to de-prioritizing remote areas from their activities due to increased transportation costs, leaving people in remote locations without access to basic assistance. While the Health Cluster continues to provide fuel to 96 per cent of the functional health facilities (293 facilities), a recent survey showed that some of the health facilities reported a decrease in number of patients seeking healthcare, decrease in operating hours in health facilities, transportation issues for medical staff, medical supplies and patients, and suspensions of some health services due to fuel shortages. Nutrition partners also warned that if the fuel

### Fuel Imports via Al Hodeidah Port



Source: UNVIM

## Fuel Imports via Al Hodeidah Port and Share of Requirements Met



Source: CIMP

crisis persists, some 867 nutrition sites will be impacted, affecting nearly 140,000 children under five and pregnant and breastfeeding women.

While the delivery of emergency food assistance is not yet affected, there are growing concerns that agricultural production will be impacted if the fuel shortages and corresponding high fuel price increments con-

tinue in the coming months. This is due to potential increments in the cost of irrigation, transportation, and agricultural inputs that could significantly lead to reduced agricultural production, considering that 39 per cent of the total cultivated area in Yemen is dependent on irrigation. The fuel shortages could also hamper control operations of the desert locusts in five governorates in the northern areas.

## IMPROVED HUMANITARIAN ACCESS AT THE RED SEA COAST

The April humanitarian update highlighted the impact of new conditions for movement permits and other bureaucratic requirements at the Red Sea coast near Al Makha in Ta'iz Governorate and Al Khukhah in Al Hodeidah Governorate. On the instructions of a new local authority operating independently of the Government of Yemen, military and security checkpoints had been instructed to stop all humanitarian actors and materials from reaching those in need, unless the humanitarian organizations complied with the new directives. The imposition of these new requirements left at least 475,000 civilians without humanitarian assistance. Through a joint advocacy campaign coordinated by OCHA, the restrictions were initially lifted for the month of Ramadan, until the end of Eid.

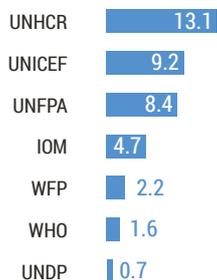
USG/ERC Mark Lowcock pointed out in his briefing to the UN Security Council on 12

May that the extension “is a promising step, and we look forward to them being cancelled altogether”. Following Eid, partner reporting has indicated that humanitarian movements resumed without interference, despite several isolated incidents that were escalated for resolution. During Ramadan, OCHA was informed by the local authority that the so-called ‘Ramadan waiver’ (to waive adherence to the new requirements) had been unilaterally extended until the end of the year. Overall, early indications suggest the extension is holding. Aid agencies urge the Government of Yemen and the local authority to permanently remove all these new requirements in the Red Sea coast area. Only by doing so can humanitarian actors reach the large number of civilians in need with humanitarian assistance in an effective, efficient and principled manner.

## EMERGENCY FUNDING BOOSTS HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE



**\$40M**  
ALLOCATIONS



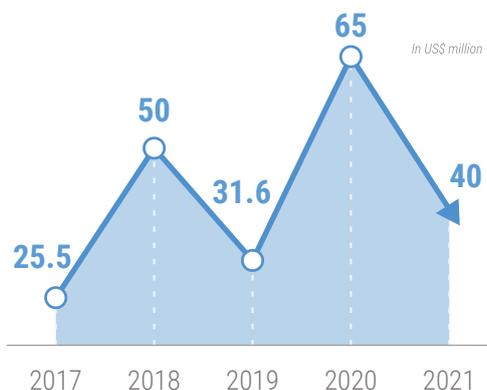
*In US\$ million*

In May 2021, USG/ERC Mark Lowcock approved seven projects for an amount of US\$40 million, funded under the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) Rapid Response window. The response strategy includes two interlinked components: (1) enabling immediate response to the humanitarian needs of displaced people resulting from the recent conflict escalation in Ma'rib and Al Jawf governorates; and (2) expansion of key common services enabling the delivery of humanitarian assistance across Yemen.

Within the first component, the CERF funding will fill critical gaps in the delivery of life-saving aid to some 95,000 people already displaced in Ma'rib and 27,000 people displaced in Al Jawf before the latest escalation of hostilities in March. The CERF allocation will also enable immediate delivery of critical assistance to a projected 105,000 newly displaced people in Ma'rib and 18,000 newly displaced people in Al Jawf. Furthermore, this funding enables the immediate scale-up of response capacity in Ma'rib and Al Jawf through the provision of air transport and logistics, which were identified in the Ma'rib humanitarian response plan as key limitations to an effective response.

Under the second component, the CERF funding will strengthen security services enabling humanitarian organizations to continue operating amidst the higher risks associated with the escalation of conflict along several frontlines across Yemen. This component also enables critically needed improvements to telecommunication and internet connectivity services relied on by humanitarian organizations, especially given prevailing remote working arrangements and limitations on telecommunications imposed by the authorities.

*Since 2017, CERF has allocated \$212.1 million to UN agencies responding to humanitarian needs in Yemen.*



*Source: YHF*

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